

VZCZCXR09594

PP RUEHBZ RUEHGU RUEHGI RUEHJO RUEHMR RUEHRN  
DE RUEHKI #0679 1701417  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 191417Z JUN 07  
FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6347  
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE  
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE  
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

UNCLAS KINSHASA 000679

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV KDEM CG

SUBJECT: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CLOSES REGULAR SESSION, REOPENS  
EXTRAORDINARY SESSION

REF: A. KINSHASA 644

- 1B. KINSHASA 588
- 1C. KINSHASA 546
- 1D. KINSHASA 590

11. (U) Summary. The National Assembly adjourned on June 15 as scheduled, after passing two key pieces of legislation on the budget and the opposition law. Deputies also approved an amended report on the Bas-Congo violence in January. The Assembly will convene an extraordinary session on June 19 to consider additional pending legislation. End summary.

12. (SBU) A draft 2007 budget totaling USD 2.47 billion passed the National Assembly on June 14 by a vote of 359 to 52, with 8 abstentions. The total budget increased from the initially proposed USD 2.14 billion (ref B). The Assembly's version of the budget retained the assumption of an average exchange rate of 560 Congolese francs per USD, although the rate of exchange is now below 500:1. There are many unanswered questions about the budget (septel), which will now be sent to the Senate for consideration. Of greatest concern is the extraordinary assumption that an additional USD 421 million of revenue will somehow materialize.

13. (U) The law on the opposition passed in an amended form by a vote of 380 to 1. Key changes from the draft law include the definition of the "extraparliamentary" opposition which will have rights and responsibilities similar to those defined for the parliamentary opposition, with the exception of specific privileges such as parliamentary immunity.

(Note: Such an "extraparliamentary" opposition would include individuals and groups, such as the UDPS, who do not currently have deputies in the National Assembly, Senate, or Provincial Assemblies. End note.) Another significant change relates to the role of the "coordinator" of the political opposition, who will now be designated by majority vote of opposition parliamentarians, rather than the head of the leading opposition party being proclaimed "chef de file," as proposed in the draft legislation (ref A).

14. (U) A majority of the Assembly approved the report on the violence in Bas-Congo (ref C) which had previously been amended in closed-door sessions. While the actual vote count was not made public, some members of the opposition complained that the report was not "explicit" enough in naming those who had committed violence. The Assembly announced that the report, along with its recommendations, will now be published.

15. (SBU) The National Assembly has now passed two of the six priority bills previously identified by its president Vital

Kamerhe in conversations with EmbOffs (ref D), and will consider key legislation on decentralization in the extraordinary session beginning June 19. Remaining priority legislation includes the draft law on the High Magistrates' Council and creation of successor organizations to the Transition-era Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) and the High Media Authority (HAM). Additional items to be considered during the extraordinary session will likely include the Assembly's own internal budget and issuance of a report on a border dispute with Angola. The Senate -- which must now consider legislation already approved by the Assembly -- will also call an extraordinary session to begin on June 19.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: No credible explanation has been given as to how the GDRC's revenues will increase by roughly \$421 million, although revenues have exceeding projections at least the past two years. The passage of the law on the role of the opposition, important as a symbol of democratic progress, was achieved with broad support of both the government and opposition members, a positive indication of Kamerhe's leadership, and the general work of the Assembly. Pushing Kamerhe's additional initiatives through by the beginning of September's ordinary session, which Kamerhe previously stated as his goal, will put both his commitment and his leadership to the test. End comment.

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